



Oconee County First Steps Partnership *Fiscal Year 2009 Annual Report*

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Sandra W. Pruitt
Executive Director:
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**Total children in county under
age 6:** 4,957

**Children in the county living
in poverty:** 19.8%

Oconee County Highlights

- **Case Data
Reports indicate
100% consent &
100% SSA
numbers**
- "I am so grateful for
my POPS Social
Worker, who
encouraged me to
obtain my GED,
which I received in
May 2009".

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Oconee County First Steps continues to be a tremendous catalyst for collaboration and networking for a cross section of persons across the county for the benefit of our youngest citizens, birth through age 5.

Even though the Oconee County First Steps FY 08-09 Budget was reduced by over 14%, our programs continued due to the wonderful cooperation and collaboration between and among our various partners.

Our board is especially grateful to the School District of Oconee County, and to the many certified trainers who provided countless hours of pro bono training so staff in over 55% of Oconee County's daycare/group and family care centers could gain their required {15} to {20} hours of re-certification training.

And, we remain appreciative of the wonderful partnership we have with the United Way of Oconee County, who provides in-kind office space, utilities, insurance, a mail box, and janitorial services for the Oconee County First Steps Office. They also provide cash match for our "TV OFF/NEURONS ON" Program.

As you review our 2009 Annual Report, we hope you will join us in celebrating another year of successful services to our youngest and "most at risk" citizens.

Sincerely,
Marie M. Dunnam, LISW-CP, Executive Director
Oconee County First Steps

First Steps to School Readiness Strategy Areas

The First Steps initiative approaches children's school readiness needs in five ways:

Family Strengthening: A parent is a child's first and best teacher. First Steps works to help parents become the best parents they can be. First Steps also helps parents further their own education.

Healthy Start: Children's development and ability to learn are profoundly impacted by their health in the earliest years. First Steps works to help families understand children's health needs through education and screenings while also working to help them access needed health services.

Quality Child Care: Quality child care provides immediate and long-term learning benefits for children. First Steps works to expand the availability of quality child-care to families and to enhance the level of quality in existing child-care environments.

Early Education: Research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool classes are more likely to start school ready to learn, as well as be more successful later in life. First Steps works to expand high-quality 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten opportunities in public and private settings.

School Transition: The transition into kindergarten is a critical time that sets the tone for children's perspectives about the school years, as well their parents' perspectives. Making a strong initial connection between school and home -- and supporting both parents and students during this transition time -- has been shown to impact students' later school success and parents' later involvement during the school years.

2008-2009 County Partnership Programs by Strategy

FAMILY STRENGTHENING.

Program Name: "PRINCIPLES OF PARENTING SUCCESSFULLY" {POPS}:

Program Description: The purpose of this program is to increase the capacity of parents to be their child's best and most important teacher by providing a holistic parenting education home visitation prevention program combined with a health component to address childhood obesity, asthma and bronchitis. Social workers are sent into the homes of the "most at risk" families with children birth to age 6 to conduct visits on a long-term basis. The POPS Program successfully addresses the following: It increases children's readiness for kindergarten and first grade; it increases the parents' knowledge of child development; promotes effective parenting practices; improves child development of pro-social behavior; increases children's access to health services; and increases the parent/caregiver's use of effective parenting practices.

Number Served:

- POPS Social Workers served (34) families with (49) adults and (80) children through 1, 156 home visits, and provided 1, 653.01 hours of direct service.

Program Results:

- All (34) families served met at least one of the following S. C. First Steps Target Risk Factors: {Abused, neglected, or in foster care; eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families {TANF}; teenage mother or low maternal education (less than a high school graduation); documented substance abuse within the home; documented maternal depression; documented domestic violence within the home; or low birth weight (under 2000 grams)}; and each case contained a Family Service Plan.
- 100% of the families provided their SSA numbers and gave their consent for their information to be used for tracking purposes.
- All POPS Social Workers have at least a four-year college degree and a combination curriculum of Parents As Teachers {PAT} for children birth through the age of three; “DSS BEST PRACTICES”; and, the “Systematic Training for Effective Parenting” {STEPS} are successfully used with fidelity.
- 100% of all families received at least two visits per month for at least 1 hour per visit, with some families receiving up to eight visits per month, depending on need. **{The average visits per month were 2.9, with the average duration being 1.43.}**
- Thirty-three (33) families were assessed using the Keys to Interactive Parenting Skills {KIPS} which is an evaluation of parenting behaviors related to interactions between parents and children. It involves a parent playing with his or her child for 20 minutes to examine 12 different behaviors. The KIPS is used to evaluate parents of children ages 2 months old up to five years of age and is an evaluation based on a 5-point scoring scale. **{On average, participants with both a baseline and current year scores, showed a 46% over-all improvement.}**
- Thirty (30) families were assessed using the Adult-Child Interactive Reading Inventory (ACIRI) which is an interactive reading inventory for parents and children ages 2.5 years old to 5 years old. The ACIRI is a literacy-specific evaluation based on the observation of a parent and child reading together and is scored on a 3-point scale. It evaluates the interactions between parents and children relating to literacy acquisition. **{On average, ADULT participants with both baseline and current scores showed a 46 percent improvement on the ACIRI, and CHILD participants with both baseline and current scores showed on average, a 42 percent improvement.}**
- 11% of all adults in the (34) families served obtained employment or better employment.
- 100% of the families now have family physicians.
- 100% of the families received all appropriate referrals to include referrals to Baby Net.
- 100% of the adults in the target families, not possessing a high school diploma, were encouraged to further their formal education.
- 18% of the adults received a GED.

- Quarterly Parent/Child Group Meetings were held to specifically address various health issues, to include childhood obesity, bronchitis and upper respiratory infections.
- POPS and the FAMILY FRIENDS formed a wonderful collaboration during this fiscal year, and families from both programs benefited from a “Fall Outing” sponsored by Square D; an “Easter Egg Hunt” sponsored by St. Mark’s Methodist Church; and several families had children and their parents to participate in Mane Stay, a program sponsored by the owners of a local horse farm.
- POPS received \$3 to \$1 match from Federal Family Preservation Funds.
- Families reported an average of 4.99% satisfaction with this program (based on 1 {poor} to 5 {excellent} point scale).

Other Information:

- POPS is having a profound influence in Oconee County as many families who would have become child protective services clients have made major improvements in their lives, and as a result have improved their self-esteem, learned proper discipline techniques, and have truly taken steps to prepare their children to arrive at first grade healthy and ready to learn.
- POPS is provided through a contract with the Oconee County Department of Social Services.

FAMILY STRENGTHENING:

Name of Program/Strategy: Literacy (Other): “TV OFF/NEURONS ON”

Program Description: The purpose of this program is to promote school readiness in children birth to age 6 by decreasing the number of hours families spend watching television, and by promoting active learning. Families learn how to replace television viewing with age appropriate interactive toys and books for maximum learning.

Number Served:

- Home visitors from the School District of Oconee County’s Therapeutic Behavioral Services Program {TBS} served (19) families with (19) adults and (25) children during monthly home visits modeling how to use interactive toys and educational books to improve cognitive and social skills.

Program Results:

- 100% of the families provided their SSA numbers and their consent for their information to be used for tracking purposes.
- 100% of the funding was used to purchase the educational books and interactive toys.
- 231 educational books and 228 interactive toys were distributed during 178 home visits.
- 100 % of the families decreased the number of hours spent watching television by approximately 95% and increased the number of books read to their children by approximately 96%. (Pre and Post Test)
- 100% of the families used the books and interactive toys with their children and demonstrated the appropriate use of the same. (Pre and Post Test and home visitor documentation.)

- Families reported a 4.99 % satisfaction with this program (based on a 1 {poor} to 5 {excellent} point scale.

Other Information:

- “TV OFF/NEURONS ON” has been a very successful program since its inception in 2002, and the Oconee County First Steps Board sees this program as augmenting the School District of Oconee County’s Therapeutic Behavioral Services Program in a very useful and cost effective manner.
- This program is provided through collaboration with the United Way of Oconee County, who also provides cash match.

QUALITY CHILD CARE:

Name of Program/Strategy: Child Care Quality Training

Program Description: The purpose of this program is to improve the quality of childcare by offering free, high quality certified training to all staff working in a child care/group or family care home in Oconee County.

Number Served:

- 189 child care staff from (21) different entities, serving an average of 2, 998 children benefited from 22 hours of high quality, free, certified training.
- 55% of all child care facilities in the county participated in the free training, thus enhancing the experiences of children as they transition from childcare to the school environment.

Program Results:

- Training is offered through a contract between Oconee County First Steps and the School District of Oconee County and every effort is made to coordinate our training with other state and local entities, i.e. DSS, Head Start, DHEC, Child Care Resource and Referral, and Tri County Technical College.
- All training is certified by the First Steps Center for Child Care Career Development (CCCD).
- Training is conducted in (2) hour segments, with each segment building on the other as opposed to stand alone workshops. The following training was offered during Fiscal Year 08-09: “Good Start-Grow Smart”; “Blood Borne Pathogens”; “Sun Safety & ABC’s of Safe Sleep”; “Moving More Everyday and Moving More, Watching Less”; “Eating Smart at Home, and Eating Smart on the Run”; “How to Incorporate Themes Throughout the Day, Part I and II”; “Grant Writing 1001”; and ‘Opening the Windows of Opportunity for Brain Development, Parts I, II and II”.
- Child Care staff are required to gain (15) to (20) hours of re-certification training each year; therefore, certificates of attendance were awarded to childcare staff after the completion of each segment of training.
- Evaluations were completed after each training session, and fiscal year 2008-2009 evaluations were 99% positive.
- In addition, the School District of Oconee County’s Childhood Division picks (2) to (4) centers at random after the completion of each six hour training segment, and the trainer visits each of those centers to ascertain the degree that staff has

implemented the ideas learned at the respective trainings. Approximately an 88% implementation rated has been documented at the centers visited.

EARLY EDUCATION:

Name of Program/Strategy: Four Year Old Kindergarten {Full Day-Public}

Program Description: The purpose of this program is to increase the number of “at risk” children attending high quality early childhood education programs by continuing the full-day four-year-old kindergarten classes at Tamassee-Salem and James M. Brown Elementary Schools.

Number Served:

- Forty {40} “at risk” children, meeting the recommended eligibility standards, who had reached four-years of age on or before September 1, 2008, were served.

Program Results:

- All participating students were targeted for participation on the basis of compounded school readiness risk factors (DIAL 3 screening score in the bottom 25%, free and reduced lunch status, mother’s education, etc.).
- Both classroom teachers had previously completed training in the High Scope Curriculum, Work Sampling materials, and class size.
- Both 4-K classes met South Carolina 4-K requirements for curriculum, pupil-teacher ratios and materials.
- 100% of the required home visits were made.
- Over 87% of the parents participated in all parent-teacher conferences, and over 90% donated supplies and or materials to the classrooms.
- 100% of 4-K students completing the program, made very significant progress as measured by teacher and parent observation, School District of Oconee County’s Progress Reports and DIAL 3 screening results.
- Participating families reported an average of 4.8 satisfaction with both programs (based on 1 {poor} to 5 {excellent} point scale).

Other Information:

- During FY 08-09, both 4-K teachers were trained in “Sounds in Motion Music” and Smart Board Technology, and as a result, all children made significant progress in letter and sound recognition. 100% of the children knew all capital and lower case letters and sounds by the end of the year.

SCHOOL TRANSITION:

Program Description: The purpose of this program is to ensure an educationally beneficial school transition by serving twenty (20) “at risk” children in the “Countdown to Kindergarten” Program.

Number Served:

- Twenty {20} “at risk” children completed the “Countdown” Program during July & August 2008.

Program Results:

- 95% of the children received free lunch.
- 5% of the children received reduced lunch.
- 100% of the children received all eight visits.
- 75% of the children were placed in their “Countdown” Home Visitor’s 5-K classroom.
- Oconee County’s Targeting Score was 6.2, the highest in the state; which verifies the most “at risk” children in the county were served.
- “Countdown to Kindergarten” resulted in improvements in parent-child interaction, including the following:
 - 19 % increase in the number of times parents read to/listened to their children read from a book.
 - 18% increase in the number of times parents talked to their child about letters, words and numbers.
 - 68% increase in the number of times parents visited a library with their children.
 - 100% of the “Countdown” families had nothing but high praise for the program.

Other Information:

- Oconee County First Steps collaborated with the School District of Oconee County, Family Friends, a volunteer mentoring program, and the Oconee County Department of Social Services for the provision of the “Countdown to Kindergarten” Program. All three entities assisted in the screening to ensure the most “at risk” rising five-year old kindergarten students were served. In addition, the School District of Oconee County provided ½ of the funding for the program, and the activity buses/drivers for the Celebration Trip to the Children’s EdVenture Museum in Columbia. Family Friends provided snacks and bottled water for the trip to Columbia, and the Department of Social Services provided coupons for a meal on the way home.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

<u>Expenditures By Funding Source</u>	
State Appropriation (<i>Fund 10</i>)	\$161, 279.74
E.I.A. Appropriation (<i>Fund 55</i>)	\$ 18, 508. 25
Lottery Appropriation (<i>Funds 35</i>)	\$ N/A
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 60</i>)	\$N/A
C.O.E. Appropriation (<i>Fund 65</i>)	\$N/A
N.F.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 70</i>)	\$N/A
State Private (<i>Fund 15</i>)	\$ 5, 779. 50
Local Private (<i>Fund 20</i>)	\$ 4, 565. 23
Federal (<i>Fund 30</i>)	\$38, 973.00
In-Kind (<i>Fund 25</i>)	\$ 206, 684. 49
TOTAL:	\$435, 790.21

<u>Expenditures by Program / Strategy Name</u>	
2031: {Family Strengthening}: {POPS}	\$197, 144.00
2042: {Family Strengthening}: “TV OFF/NEURONS ON”	\$ 3, 397. 10
3141: {Early Education}: Full Day 4-K (Public)	\$172, 107. 27
4062: {School Transition}: “Countdown”	\$ 3, 615. 25
6051: {Child Care Training}	\$ 4, 366. 12
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
Indirect Programmatic Functions	\$ 31, 666. 40
Administrative Functions	\$ 23, 494. 07
TOTAL:	\$ 435, 790. 21

NOTABLE DONORS

<i>DONOR'S NAME</i>	AMOUNT
School District of Oconee County	\$3, 738
United Way of Oconee County	\$2, 000
Church of the Ascension	\$ 500
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
TOTAL:	\$6, 238

Local Match Percentage for FY 2009: 99.23%

BOARD INFORMATION:

During Fiscal Year 2009, the Oconee County First Steps Board and other Partnership Members volunteered **1, 622 hours**, to include time spent on the “Baby Fair” and the “Warm a Child for the Winter” Project.

Oconee County First Steps’ Signature Project, “Warm a Child for the Winter” is held each year during October, which is National Make a Difference Month. During October 2008, three hundred and twenty-five (325) new baby blankets, throws; single and double blankets were collected by board and partnership members, various churches and the general public. During the November 20, 2008 Annual Meeting, the items were donated to Oconee A.I.D. in Walhalla; Bethesda Ministries and the Soup Kitchen in Seneca, and “We Care Ministries” in Westminster. The items were then distributed to families with at least one child birth to age 6 during the 2008-2009 winter months.

Value of Volunteer Time for FY 2009:
\$20.25 x 1, 622 volunteer hours= \$32, 845. 50

COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Sandra W. Pruitt, Board Chair
Legislative Appointee

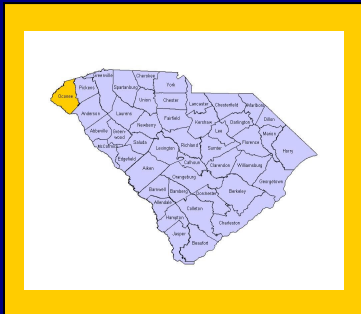
The Reverend Tracy Sexton, Board Vice Chair
Faith Category

Molly Tannery, Board Secretary
Family Strengthening Category

Christy Addis, Pre-K/Primary Education
Annette Burney, Legislative Appointee
Jessica Cantrell, Non-Profit
Charlotte Chirillo, Business
Kathleen S. Davis, Child Care & Early Development Provider
Michelle Duvall, Child Care & Early Childhood Education
Suzanne Evans, Early Education
Danita Freeman, Early Childhood Education
Sharon Grant, Family Strengthening
Ed Halbig, Transportation
Misty Lee, DHEC Appointee {Reappointed in April 2009}
Judy Metcalf, DSS Appointee
Ann Miller, Early Education
Marsha Morrhead, Health
Darlene Quattlebaum, Child Care & Early Childhood Education
Paula Schubert, Early Education
Blythe Smith, DHEC Appointee until January 2009}
Sandie J. Smyth, Non-Profit
Misty Stasney, Parent of a Child in a First Steps Program
Wanda Warner, School District of Oconee County Appointee
George Washington, Head Start Appointee
J. Daniel Whitehurst, Jr., Legislative Appointee

COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT

In FY 09, First Steps County Partnerships statewide made it a priority to become increasingly data-driven. County Partnerships successfully began using powerful new components of the First Steps data system, and County Partnerships also utilized data in new ways to drive their FY 09 program plans. In addition to enhanced program data tracking, County Partnerships are also focusing on the best available data about children and families to best understand their communities' needs. At the end of FY 08 and the beginning of FY 09, County Partnerships began an extensive analysis of this data, including data about the risk factors known to impact children's potential school success, such as low birth weight, teen mothers, and families living in poverty. A county-level risk data report is included in the subsequent pages of the report.



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Oconee County

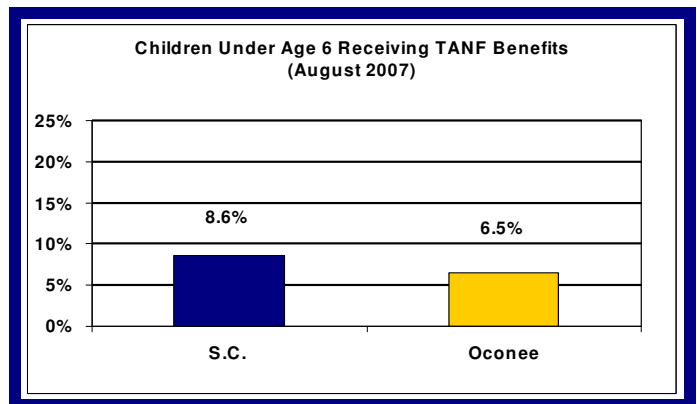
Total Children Under Six: 4,937

CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4% Oconee County (2007): 6.5%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 15 Oconee County children has an annual family income equivalent to \$10,325 (or less) for a family of four. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 45% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Children in deep poverty often face a wide variety of school readiness obstacles, ranging from inadequate prenatal care and nutrition to low maternal education.
- 323 of Oconee County’s 4,937 children under age 6 received federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits during 2007, indicating a family income at or below 50% of the federal poverty definition.

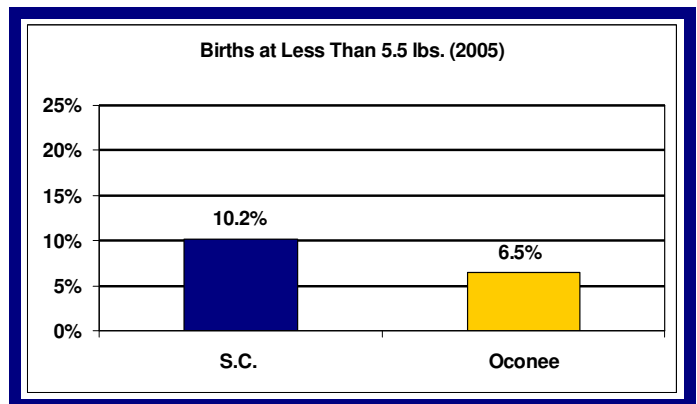


CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2% Oconee County (2005): 6.5%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 15 Oconee County children is born at a weight less than 5.5 lbs. A recent statewide analysis suggests that at least one-third of these children (36%-52% depending on weight category) will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Babies born at low weights are often prone to developmental delays associated with early academic failure.
- Many have received inadequate prenatal care and suffer from significant health complications.
- 51 of the 788 children born in Oconee County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.

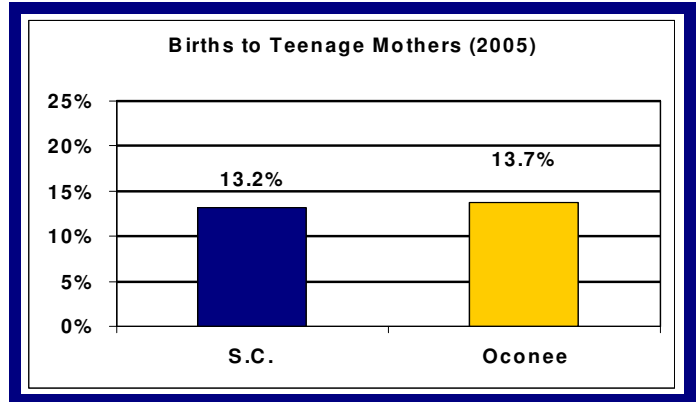


BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2% Oconee County (2005): 13.7%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 7 Oconee County births is to a mother under 20 years of age. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 43% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Teenage parents often lack the maturity and knowledge required to optimally fulfill important parental responsibilities, are less likely to advance their own educational attainment and often fail to advance beyond low-income status.
- 108 of the 788 children born in Oconee County during 2005 had teenage mothers.

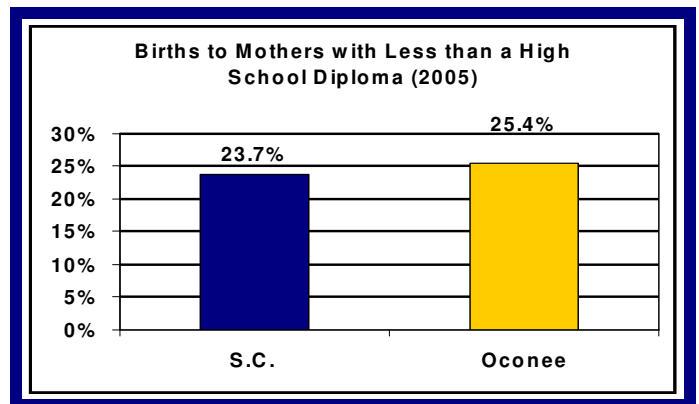


BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7% Oconee County (2005): 25.4%

Fast Fact: 1 in 4 children in Oconee County is born to a mother possessing less than a high school diploma. A recent statewide analysis suggests that roughly half (48%) of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Research suggests that a mother’s own educational attainment is closely linked to the subsequent academic performance of her children.
- 200 of the 788 children born in Oconee County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.



All data provided by the SC Budget and Control Board’s Office of Research and Statistics

The 2009 School Readiness Risk Profile for Oconee County has been of keen interest to the Oconee County First Steps Board, and mirrors the information collected for our most recent countywide needs assessment.

The Oconee County First Steps Board agrees there is more work to do, but believes its efforts along with those of its collaborative partners are making a profound difference in the lives of our young parents and in preparing the county's youngest and "most at risk" citizens to arrive at first grade healthy and ready to learn.

SUCCESS STORY

“Principles of Parenting Successfully” {POPS} Family

The Cobb family originally entered the POPS Program in 2005. The family consists of Ms. Tammy Cobb, a thirty-three year old single mother of two children, A'mirycal Diggs, a twelve year old in the 7th grade at Seneca Middle School, and the POPS target child, Tamara Mariah Holland, a six year old in the first grade at Blue Ridge Elementary School. The family lives in a three-bedroom apartment in Seneca.

During the family's involvement with the POPS Program, the Social Worker has helped secure a medical home for the children and provided Ms. Cobb with the necessary resources to utilize the Rosa Clark Medical Clinic. The SW has also helped the family maintain connections with the needed community resources such as funding for utilities and food assistance.

Ms. Cobb has been provided materials and tips on budgeting, as well as hands on lessons. Mr. Cobb has learned valuable parenting skills that have helped her deal with the day-to-day stress of being a single parent, especially during the trying economical times of the past few years.

The POPS program has assisted Mariah to successfully obtain the skills and knowledge to finish Head Start, and kindergarten and to enter the first grade on target with enthusiasm and pride.

Ms. Cobb was employed at West Point Stevens when she entered the program, but the plant closed later on, and she became unemployed. Within a few months of becoming unemployed, she became interested in obtaining her GED.

The Social Worker assisted Ms. Cobb in entering the One Stop Program through the South Carolina Employment Security Commission. Ms. Cobb took the required skills test and the pre-GED test and entered the 8-week course for completion of her GED requirements. She completed the course and took the GED on December 8, 2008. She received her results in January 2009 and found out that she did not pass the math portion of the testing. However, sadden by this event; Ms. Cobb went back to the GED lab for 6-more weeks, to concentrate on her math skills. She retook the test in May 2009 and this time, she successfully passed, and obtained her GED.

This had been her dream, and ultimate goal, and it occurred right before Mariah, the target child was due to age out of the program.

The Cobb family successfully graduated from the POPS Program in June 2009.

Submitted by:
Sharon Grant, Lead POPS Worker
Oconee County Department of Social Services

THE PAST TEN YEARS

The SC General Assembly created in 1999 the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Initiative as a "comprehensive, results oriented initiative for improving early childhood development by providing, through county partnerships, public and private funds and support for high quality early childhood development and education services for children by providing support for their families' efforts toward enabling their children to reach school ready to learn".

The following has occurred over the past ten years:

The BEGINNING: FY 1999-2000 and FY 2000-2001:

- *The Oconee County First Steps Organizational Meeting was held on September 30, 1999.*
- *The first board members were elected on October 14, 1999.*
- *The first Board Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary were elected on October 21, 1999.*
- *Work began on the Level I Planning Grant in November 1999.*
- *Level I Grant Submitted in January 2000.*
- *Subcommittee Work: On-Going*
- *Level I Funding Received and Community First Bank in Seneca agreed to be the fiscal agent as an in-kind contribution: July 2000.*
- *Press Conference and Reception held to announce the receipt of Level I funding: August 2000.*
- *Oconee County First Steps Office, provided by the School District of Oconee County, opened; Bank of American donated office furnishings; and a part-time Project coordinator was hired: September 2000.*
- *Oconee County First Steps participated in the development of a call-in-show to assist with needs assessments for the upstate counties.*
- *Request for Quotations (RFQ) was issued for the hiring of a consultant to work with the board on the county needs assessment and strategy plan: October 2000.*
- *Consultant hired: November 2000.*
- *First Annual Meeting Held: November 2000*
- *Oconee County Parents Surveyed: December 2000*
- *One-On-One Board Interviews Held: December 2000*
- *Legislative Area Retreat Held: January 2001*
- *(5) Town Meetings Held: January 2001*
- *Decision Criteria Selected: January 2001*
- *Strategic Planning Retreat Held: February 2001*
- *Board Made Decision on Strategies: February 2001*
- *Work on Level II Grant Application Began: February 2001*

- *Level II Grant Application Submitted: March 2, 2001*
- *Site Visit Conducted: March 21, 2001*
- *Level II Grant Application Approved: April 2001*
- *Transportation Committee Met for First Time: April 2001*
- *Parenting RFQ Committee Met: May-June 2001*
- *ESL Language Development classes for Four-Year Olds held: June 2001*
- *Child Care Training Began: June 2001*
- *Parenting Education Home Visitation Program Request for Quotations {RFQ} Posted: July 2001*
- *Three new 4-K classes, funded with First Steps funds, opened (Westminster Elementary, James M. Brown and Tamassee-Salem Elementary): August 2001*
- *Oconee County DSS Awarded Parenting Education Home Visitation Program Contract: August 2001.*
- *Second Transportation Meeting held: September 2001.*
- *Request for Quotations {RFQ} for Transportation Study Posted: November 2001.*
- *Work began on a health care strategy with DHEC in July 2001.*
- *KA & Associates awarded the Transportation Study Contract: December 2001*
- *Transportation Study completed January –June 2002, and the results were presented to the Oconee County First Steps Board, the Municipal Association, and to the Oconee County Council.*

THE NUMBERS

FY 01-02 THROUGH FY 08-09

EARLY EDUCATION

- 336 “high” risk” children in “high need” schools have been served in First Steps funded full day 4-K classes. And, according to School District Staff, retention rates in 5-K and 1st grade have been considerably less for children who have attended the First Steps funded full day 4-K’s when compared with children who have attended ½ day 4-K programs. The students from the First Steps funded 4-K’s in FY 01-02 took the Pact Test in the spring of 2006, and the School District of Oconee County issued a report concerning how these students scores compared to the scores of all SDOC 3rd graders, and to other third grade students on subsidized lunch. The results were amazing as both the ELA and Math scores were better for the Pre-K graduates from the First Steps funded classes, in spite of coming from high poverty families and being reared by single mothers with very low educational levels.

SCHOOL TRANSITION

- 100 “high risk” children have been served in the First Steps/School District of Oconee County funded “Countdown to Kindergarten” Program since the summer of 2004, and evaluations show that these children and their parents have benefited tremendously from the program. And, for most of the years in which Oconee County has participated, our targeting score has been the highest in the state, showing that we have indeed served the most “at risk” children. {This program has been provided through a collaboration among the School District of Oconee County, the Oconee County Department of Social Services and Family Friends, a volunteer mentoring program.}

HEALTH

- 140 children, birth to age 5, were served in FY 01-02 in three Oconee County ABC (Advocate for Better Care) Child Care Centers.
- 15 adults and 107 children were served between January 1- 2003 and June 30, 2003, through a contract with DHEC. .
- Due to the collaboration and relationships formed during the planning stages of the public health strategy, a grant was written and the School District of Oconee County was awarded funding from the Duke Endowment fund for the hiring of nurses for the remaining (7) elementary schools in the county.

FAMILY STRENGTHENING

- 499 adults and 637 children have been served through the “Principles of Parenting Successfully” {POPS} Program, a long term, holistic in home parenting education prevention program, provided through a contract with the Oconee County Department of Social Services. Without a doubt, many of these families would have become Child Protective Statistics without the prevention services offered by this program. And, the parents would not have been afforded the training and experience to become their children’s “first and best teachers”. This program drew \$1 to \$1 match from the Federal Family Preservation Program from FY 01-02 through FY 04-05. Beginning with FY 05-06, the program has been matched \$3 to \$1 with Federal Family Preservation Funds.
- All families served by POPS have medical homes, and a health component was added in FY 04-05 to particularly address childhood obesity, bronchitis and upper respiratory infections. We have had many success stories since the beginning of the program. We have had clients go to work and be eligible for Habitat houses, and we

have many clients who have furthered their education, received GED's, attended technical college, and a few have gone even further in school. We had three families to graduate in June this year, and one of the women had been working on her GED for several years. You should have seen the look on her face with she passed the test in May 2009.

- In addition, the majority of the POPS children have entered 4-K and went on to first grade, healthy and ready to learn.
- 238 adults and 296 children have been served through a program entitled "TV OFF/NEURONS ON" since FY 02-03. This program is provided through collaboration between First Steps and the United Way of Oconee County. The mission of the program is to provide school readiness in children birth to age 6 by decreasing the number of hours families spend watching television and by promoting active learning. There is no administrative over-head for the program as home visitors from existing programs are used, and they spend an hour per month with each of their assigned children and parents modeling how to use educational books and interactive toys to improve cognitive and social skills. The children get to get the books and toys.

CHILD CARE TRAINING

- An average of 175 staff per year from over 65% of the child care, group and family care homes in the county have benefited from 220.50 hours of free certified training since FY 01-02, and an average of 2, 600 children per year have been touched by the training. The training has enabled staff to obtain their required (15) to (20) hours of re-certification totally FREE OF CHARGE, resulting in a cost savings of thousands of dollars to this population. In addition, this training has enhanced the experience of children as they transition from childcare to the school environment, and has also strengthened the collaboration between child care providers and the school district. {The program is provided through a contract between First Steps and the School District of Oconee County.}

TRANSPORTATION

- The FY 01-02 First Step Funded Transportation Study, supported by the Oconee County Legislative Delegation, documented the need for a public transportation system to assist families with children birth to age six in accessing services, and was used by the City of Seneca as they applied for state and federal transportation funds to work

toward that goal. The Clemson Area Transit System began serving the Greater Seneca Area effective October 16, 2006, and Oconee County First Steps was cited as a catalyst in bringing the CAT System to the county.

VOLUNTEER TIME AND VALUE
FY 1999-2000-FY 2008-2009

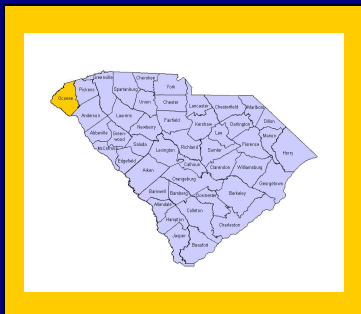
- 12, 325 volunteer hours have been provided since FY 1999-2000, at a value of \$212, 997.

TOTAL AMOUNT OF LEVERAGED FUNDING

- Leverage funding in the amount of \$2, 326,956 has been provided since FY 2000-2001.

ADMINISTRATIVE OVER-HEAD

- Oconee County First Steps has managed to keep its administrative over-head at a the very low rate of 4% to 6% from the beginning, and chose to put the majority of their funding into programs that serve the most " at risk" families in the county.



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Oconee County

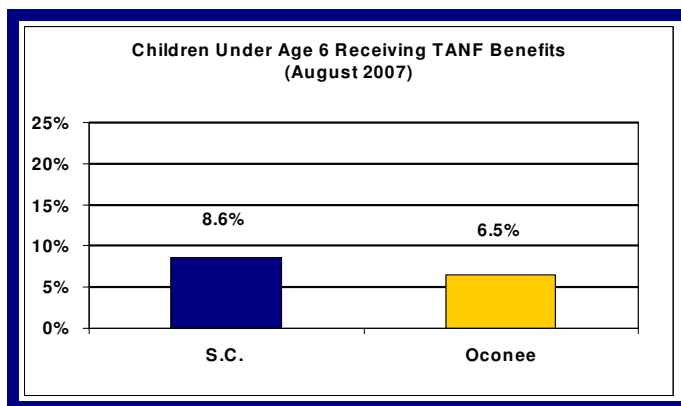
Total Children Under Six: 4,937

CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4% Oconee County (2007): 6.5%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 15 Oconee County children has an annual family income equivalent to \$10,325 (or less) for a family of four. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 45% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Children in deep poverty often face a wide variety of school readiness obstacles, ranging from inadequate prenatal care and nutrition to low maternal education.
- 323 of Oconee County’s 4,937 children under age 6 received federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits during 2007, indicating a family income at or below 50% of the federal poverty definition.

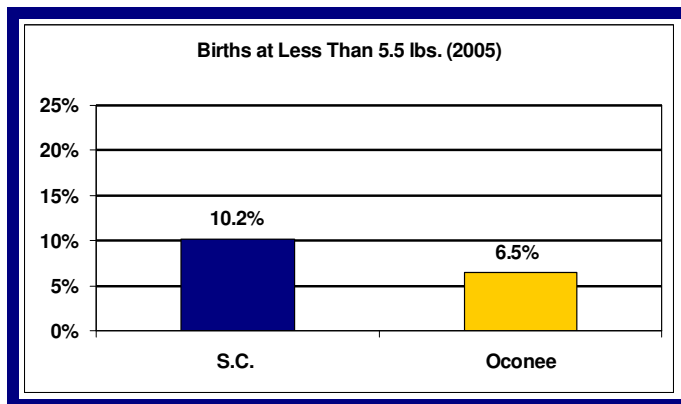


CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2% Oconee County (2005): 6.5%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 15 Oconee County children is born at a weight less than 5.5 lbs. A recent statewide analysis suggests that at least one-third of these children (36%-52% depending on weight category) will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Babies born at low weights are often prone to developmental delays associated with early academic failure.
- Many have received inadequate prenatal care and suffer from significant health complications.
- 51 of the 788 children born in Oconee County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.

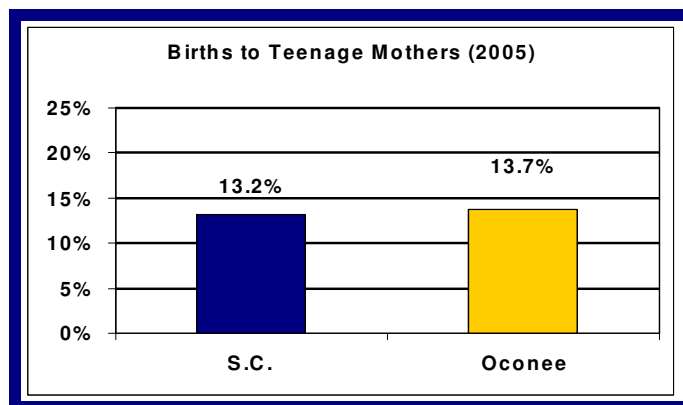


BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2% Oconee County (2005): 13.7%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 7 Oconee County births is to a mother under 20 years of age. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 43% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Teenage parents often lack the maturity and knowledge required to optimally fulfill important parental responsibilities, are less likely to advance their own educational attainment and often fail to advance beyond low-income status.
- 108 of the 788 children born in Oconee County during 2005 had teenage mothers.

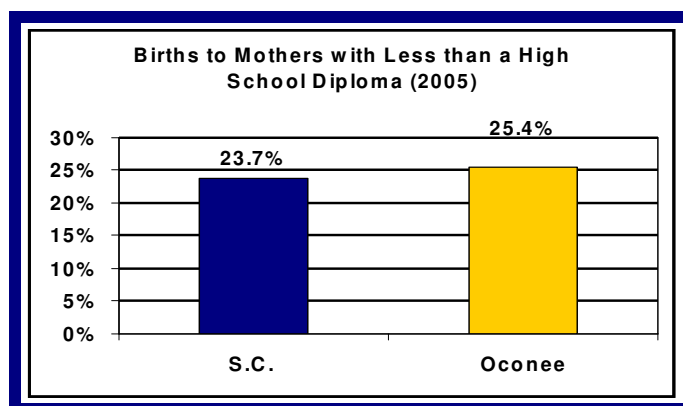


BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7% Oconee County (2005): 25.4%

Fast Fact: 1 in 4 children in Oconee County is born to a mother possessing less than a high school diploma. A recent statewide analysis suggests that roughly half (48%) of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Research suggests that a mother’s own educational attainment is closely linked to the subsequent academic performance of her children.
- 200 of the 788 children born in Oconee County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.



All data provided by the SC Budget and Control Board’s Office of Research and Statistics